

Use of the LGBF

Making LGBF data work, driving decisions and better reporting

Renfrewshire Council

Background

Renfrewshire sought to further strengthen its approach to using Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) data, incorporating it into their wider performance framework to support senior leaders and services in priority-setting and improvement work, but also using it as part of its public-facing performance reports. The intention was to make the data more useful for a range of audiences.

Key activities

Embedding LGBF data in performance management

Renfrewshire Council strengthened how LGBF data is used within internal performance management arrangements. LGBF data is used within senior management forums, including the officer-led Performance Board discussions, to support analysis, challenge and decision-making. Performance discussions focus not only on reporting results, but on understanding variation, identifying where improvement is most needed, and agreeing where to prioritise action across services. This sits alongside effective elected member scrutiny; updates on LGBF indicators are provided to members of our Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board every six months, and the LGBF is part of our service improvement plan reporting to other Council boards.

Developing an interactive public report

Renfrewshire Council uses the arcGIS platform to create its annual Public Performance Report as a Storymap, hosted online. This report combines narrative, images and embedded data visualisations and videos, creating a dynamic and attractive report that is easy to explore and allows users to engage with content in a more flexible and accessible way. Features of this approach include:

- **Data organised around themes**
LGBF indicators are grouped within broad themes aligned to how performance is described across the report. This provides a consistent structure, making it easier for users to navigate information and understand how different areas of performance connect.
- **Combining narrative, images and video content with data**
Each section includes narrative covering local priorities, key developments and next steps, alongside LGBF indicators and, where relevant, additional local measures. This helps explain what the data shows, providing context so users can better understand performance rather than relying on headline figures alone. It also includes time-series data so that users can see trends over time.

- **Using visualisation and drill-down features**

Embedded Power BI visuals allow users to explore comparisons, trends and underlying detail. This gives users control over how deeply they want to explore the data, supporting both high-level understanding and more detailed analysis.

- **Providing balanced and transparent reporting**

The Council presents a full range of performance information, covering strengths, progress and ongoing challenges, supported by explanation where needed. This creates a more balanced view of performance and supports more open and informed interpretation of results.

- **Linking to wider performance activity**

The report connects to wider performance and improvement information, with LGBF data also used internally within service planning and reporting. This creates a clearer link between public reporting and how performance is managed across the organisation.

Benefits and impact

Strengthened use of LGBF by senior leadership

LGBF data is used by senior leadership, including the Corporate Management Team and the Performance Board to inform discussion, challenge services and support decision-making. This has embedded LGBF as part of core performance management processes rather than a standalone reporting requirement.

More balanced and credible view of performance

In the past, reporting on LGBF tended to have a bigger focus on areas of challenge. Reporting now includes areas of strong performance, improvement over time and ongoing challenges. This helps avoid overly negative or defensive reporting, creates a more rounded picture and supports a more credible and proportionate view of performance across services.

More constructive and consistent performance discussions

Combining benchmarking data with narrative and context has improved how performance is discussed internally. Services and senior leaders are working from a shared understanding of what the data shows and what sits behind it. This has supported more focused and informed challenge, with senior leaders and services using a shared evidence base to identify areas that require attention and agree priorities for improvement. The approach has shifted discussions from describing performance to actively using data to inform decisions. The approach is expected to translate into measurable changes in performance over time, with early signs of improvement already emerging in local indicators.

Clearer presentation of performance information

Moving to a more structured and visual approach has made performance information easier to understand and use. Users can engage with the data more quickly, without needing to interpret complex tables or large volumes of text. This has improved how information is used in both reporting and discussion, particularly at senior level. Leaders make use of the LGBF dashboard as part of this.

Stronger integration of data and context

Presenting LGBF data alongside narrative and local context has improved how performance is interpreted. Indicators are no longer viewed in isolation, which reduces the risk of misinterpretation and supports a more accurate understanding of what is driving performance. This also helps ensure that discussion focuses on meaningful issues rather than headline figures alone.

More effective use of benchmarking to support understanding

The approach supports a shift from simply reporting benchmarking data to using it to explain and act on performance. By setting out context, trends and underlying factors, the Council is better able to understand how it compares with others and what this means locally. This supports a more targeted approach, with greater focus on areas where variation between councils highlights the strongest opportunities for improvement.

Use of data to prioritise improvement activity

LGBF is used to focus attention on areas where performance differs most, rather than treating all indicators equally. This supports more deliberate prioritisation of improvement effort and resources across services, allowing the Council to concentrate activity where it is most likely to have impact.

Learning and reflections

Leadership buy-in is critical

Strong engagement from senior leadership has been essential in moving from reporting performance to actively using data to support challenge, prioritisation and decision-making across services.

Presentation shapes how data is used

How data is presented has a direct impact on how it is understood.

Moving to a more accessible, visual format has made it easier for users to engage with LGBF data and supports more meaningful discussion.

Context is essential

Indicators on their own provide limited insight.

Adding narrative, explanation and local context helps users interpret performance more effectively and reduces the risk of misunderstanding.

Balanced reporting supports better discussion

Focusing only on areas of poor performance can lead to narrow or defensive conversations.

Providing a balanced view, including strengths and improvement, creates a more constructive basis for discussion and scrutiny. However, achieving this requires a shift beyond reporting, with leaders and services engaging directly with the data to inform decisions and priorities.

Integration strengthens reporting

Linking LGBF data with wider performance information adds value.

Using LGBF alongside local indicators and narrative creates a more complete picture and supports a more integrated approach to performance reporting.

Increasing public engagement remains a focus area

While the format has improved accessibility, public engagement with the Council's performance content remains a focus for the Council. The Council recognises the need to continue to be innovative and improve visibility and accessibility, including improving how users find and access the report and developing more active approaches to communication. Work is ongoing as part of a wider programme to enhance the digital offering and support residents to easily find information on how the Council performs.

Sustained effort is required to embed change

Embedding this approach has required significant staff input and coordination across services, particularly in the early stages. Progress has depended on sustained effort rather than one-off changes to reporting processes.

Contact for Enquiries

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